

1100 CLANDESTINE DRUG LABS

Chapter: **Staff Responsibilities**

Section: **Worker Safety**



New Hampshire Division for Children, Youth and Families Policy Manual

Policy Directive: **18-06**

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Approved:

Joseph E. Ribsam, Jr., DCYF Director

Related Statute(s): [RSA 169-B](#), [RSA 169-C](#), and [RSA 169-D](#)

Related Admin Rule(s):

Related Federal Regulation(s):

Related Form(s): [DHHS Employee Notice of Accidental Injury or Occupational Illness](#)

Bridges' Screen(s) and Attachment(s):

Everyone deserves to be safe. Clandestine drug labs pose a significant risk to the safety and welfare of all individuals. The chemicals used may cause acute and long-term effects to those exposed. Clandestine drug labs may be used to manufacture a wide range of illicit drugs and may be found across New Hampshire in any type of community. The Division for Children, Youth and Families acknowledges staff may be exposed to clandestine drug labs in the normal course of business and is committed to ensuring the safety and well-being of staff, families and the community.

Purpose

This policy outlines DCYF staff response to clandestine drug labs.

Definitions

"Clandestine Drug Lab" means an illegal operation at which drugs are or were produced.

"DCYF" or the **"Division"** means the Department of Health and Human Services' Division for Children, Youth and Families.

"Staff" for the purpose of this policy means any individual employed by the Division for Children, Youth and Families (DCYF) or working through DCYF in a contracted position, internship, or volunteer program (to include Parent Leaders).

Policy

- I. Clandestine drug labs are considered hazardous waste sites and must only be entered by trained and equipped personnel.
- II. Staff shall not knowingly enter a location suspected to be a clandestine drug lab.
- III. Immediate Staff Response:
 - A. If staff suspect a clandestine drug lab after entering a location, staff shall prioritize their own safety and leave the area immediately.
 1. Do not touch any surface, chemical, or anyone in the suspected crime scene;
 2. Do not smell any chemical, substance, or container;

3. Do not smoke or produce an electrical spark; and
 4. Do not turn on or off light switches, use a cell phone, or connect electrical devices.
- B. Upon leaving the building, seek a safe location; and
- C. Call 911:
1. Identify yourself as a staff of DCYF;
 2. Report the presence of a suspected clandestine drug lab, the address, and what you saw that lead you to believe there might be a suspected lab;
 3. Report the number of children/youth and adults present; and
 4. Provide any additional information as requested by the 911 operator.
- D. Staff are prohibited from re-entering the location until it has been cleared by the responding agencies.
- E. Staff shall remain available to assist the responding agencies.
- F. Staff shall call their Supervisor or Field Administrator to report the incident:
1. Supervisors or Field Administrators shall ensure Child Protective Services is notified, if not already involved, if there are any minor children/youth present; and
 2. Supervisors or Field Administrators shall ensure subsequent DCYF incident reporting procedures are followed, including notice of the incident to immediate Supervisors up to the DCYF Director or designee.
- G. Staff shall assist Law Enforcement to ensure the safety of any children/youth present and the community according to staffs' standard case management practices, and assist the Supervisor/Field Administrator as applicable.
- IV. Post incident response:
- A. Staff must ensure the incident is documented according to their standard practices. This includes documentation of the contact in Bridges, a [workplace injury form](#) regarding the exposure, and completion of any Incident Reports as required;
 - B. Supervisors shall debrief staff by the end of the staff's business day, or as soon as possible;
 - C. Staff experiencing any difficulties related to the incident may access supportive services as needed; and
 - D. Staff shall cooperate with any ensuing investigation or prosecution.

Practice Guidance

What are some of the signs or evidence of clandestine drug lab operations?

- Exterior and interior indicators can include, but are not limited to:

- Unusually strong odors, like cat urine, ether, ammonia, acetone, or solvents;
- Residences with the windows blacked out;
- Excessive trash buildup, including antifreeze containers, lantern fuel cans, red chemically stained coffee filters, drain cleaner, duct tape, and empty cold, flu, and asthma medication boxes or blister packs;
- Unusual amounts of clear glass containers; and a collection of chemical bottles, hoses, and pressurized cylinders, such as modified propane tanks, fire extinguishers, scuba tanks, and soda dispensers; and
- Iodine or chemical stained bathroom or kitchen fixtures.
- The above list is not exhaustive but contains observations that may be signs of clandestine drug lab operations. Be mindful that some indicators may be indicative of concerns other than a clandestine drug lab operation dependent on the circumstances.

What are the potential health effects of exposure to a clandestine drug lab?

- Acute toxic exposure to the chemicals through inhalation, ingestion, or skin or eye absorption include:
 - Shortness of breath, cough, chest pain, dizziness, lack of coordination, chemical irritation, and burns to skin, eyes, nose, and mouth; and
 - Headache, nausea, fatigue, lethargy, aggression, and violence.
- Long-term exposure effects include: liver and kidney damage, neurological problems, brain damage, birth defects, miscarriages, and increased risk of cancer.

Where can I find more information about clandestine drug labs?

- Additional information may be found in the U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Community Oriented Policing Standards publication, [Clandestine Drug Labs](#).
- For a wider perspective, the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration homepage is <https://www.dea.gov/index.shtml>.

Where have clandestine drug labs been found in New Hampshire?

- The U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration maintains a map of clandestine drug labs reported throughout the nation. Click on the following link for an updated list of New Hampshire communities where clandestine drug labs have been reported: <https://www.dea.gov/clanglab/clang-lab.shtml>.